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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the Classroom Management Decision Point Series, a training tool that provides an opportunity for teachers to practice making decisions concerning incidents in elementary and secondary classrooms. This tool may be used in workshop groups or placed in a media center for students to complete the decision making response forms on an individual basis. Open-ended vignettes are presented in a simulation format ending at a decision point requiring the viewer to determine a course of action that would maintain an effective learning environment. Included in the description is an overview of the vignette topics as well as guide for the facilitator of a workshop. A decision making model is outlined, providing a step-by-step guide that may be used to determine an appropriate strategy for dealing with a disruptive classroom situation. A synthesis of some of the more important ideas and research relative to classroom management is included. (JD)

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Preparing Teachers For Classroom Management Decisions Using Simulated Open-Ended Video Vignettes

By

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Presented at AACTE February 19, 1988

Teachers are confronted with a number of situations that require immediate decisions to accomplish their work in an effective manner. Many of these decisions have to be made in seconds and with very limited information concerning the overall classroom context. Since many of the situations are complex, information must be quickly processed to make a unique decision in many cases. Teachers need opportunities to make these decisions in a safe or simulated environment.

The **Classroom Management Decision Point Series** was developed as a training tool to provide an opportunity for teachers to practice making decisions concerning incidents in elementary and secondary classrooms. The open-ended video vignettes are presented in a simulation format ending at a decision point requiring the viewer to determine a course of action to maintain an effective learning environment.

RATIONALE

A specific classroom management philosophy is not advocated in the **Decision Point Series**. Although preventive measures and positive reinforcement approaches seem to provide for more effective learning environments, the teacher must base management decisions on theory with a sense of the total classroom situation in mind. Teachers and students continuously negotiate rules and behaviors in the classroom through a variety of philosophies and practices. The **Decision Point Series** should be used along with a thorough study of the research and related theory in classroom management. (See the extensive section later in this study guide on Classroom Management Research.) Indeed, the professional teacher emerges when students are motivated to learn in a fair and cooperative environment.

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OVERVIEW OF VIGNETTES

ROOM 309: Part I/High School

Roll Call; Long Trip; Homework; Note Passing; Go to the Office; Short Nap; Picking on Me; High on My Own; Who's Talking?; Mirror Mirror; Hard Rock; Turn It in Later; and May I See Amy?

ROOM 309: Part II/High School; Junior High

In My Face; My Desk; Please Don't; Day Dreamer; Homework for Next Class; Cooperative Exam; Pay Attention; Bugging Me; Let Someone Else Read; Shirt for the Day; Really Have to Go; Late Quiz; Take That; and Time for Love.

ROOM 109: Elementary

Checking Homework; What Do You Want Me to Do?; Tic Tac Toe; Missing Book; Note Writing; Restroom Break; Need to Talk to You; Never Make Good Grades; You Never Call on Me; Pass the Note; Noise in the Classroom; Draw with Me; Hercules; Small Loan for Lunch; I Can't Read This; You're Picking on Me; Gum in Your Mouth?; Pushing in Line; Let's Settle This, Now.

FACILITATOR ROLE

The facilitator guides participants through the decision making model , encouraging the flow of ideas in a cooperative but challenging learning environment. Both the participants and the facilitator should be raising questions and taking positions relative to the alternative ways to handle disruptive situations.

The **Decision Point Series** can be used to develop classroom management concepts in a group with the facilitator leading the decision making process. Also, the **Decision Point Series** can be placed in a media center for students to use individually to complete the decision making, response forms. A group follow-up should occur in order for participants to capitalize on the discussion of other alternatives.

Irrespective of how the **Decision Point Series** is used, participants should develop a philosophy of classroom management conducive to their own teaching personalities and philosophies. The user of the **Decision Point Series** is challenged to arrive at decisions concerning very complex social learning situations. The facilitator can help participants develop this philosophy through patient guidance and thoughtful insights.

DECISION MAKING

The facilitator should use a decision making model to channel discussions in arriving at the best alternatives. In some cases the decision may be to do nothing, depending on the overall situation and the amount of disruption. The lively discussions provide the medium for idea exchange not only about the best utilization of theory, but also with an understanding of various educational philosophies and differences in teaching personalities.

When confronted with a specific decision point in a vignette, the realities of the classroom are experienced in a safe environment for practicing professional decision making. This safe environment enables prospective teachers to make decisions insulated from the real world consequences of their actions. On the other hand, they can risk and test a decision with their peers to arrive at alternatives from various classroom situations. Most importantly, when participants view the **Decision Point Series** in groups, it enables them to share and even change opinions based on a "better idea" from one of their peers.

DECISION MAKING MODEL

The following decision making model is used to determine an appropriate strategy for dealing with a disruptive classroom situation.

1. IDENTIFY THE DISRUPTIVE SITUATION

Information should be collected to determine the complete nature of the disruptive situation. Most classroom situations are extremely complex, with variables including student characteristics, subject matter, teacher characteristics, and the physical environment. All of these variables may in some way affect the learning environment and the disruptive situation.

FACILITATION QUESTION:

What did you see, notice, hear, and infer while viewing the vignette?

2. DETERMINE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

A. Generate alternative solutions for each disruptive situations without using judgmental or evaluative criteria. Use a "brainstorming" technique to develop the alternatives.

FACILITATION QUESTION:

What are the possible alternatives for solving this problem?

B. Evaluate the pros and cons of each alternative solution.

FACILITATION QUESTION:

What are the pros and cons of each alternative?

3. MAKE A DECISION

Select the "best" decision and explain the reason for this decision.

FACILITATION QUESTIONS:

What is your course of action?
What would you do?
What is the reason for your action?

DECISION MAKING FORM

TITLE of VIGNETTE _____

A. OBSERVATIONS

B. ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

+'s | -'s

1.

2.

3.

C. MAKE A DECISION

REASON FOR DECISION

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

The following statements are a synthesis of some of the more important ideas and research relative to classroom management.

Discipline is not an end in itself. Like the foundation of a house, it is the base upon which all else is built. (Bell and Stefanich, 1984)

When teachers find they must use direct control techniques frequently and that the techniques are only marginally or temporarily effective, frustration and self-doubt ensue. (Kindsvatter and McLaughlin, 1985)

...Teachers typically function in accordance with short range goals. In and of itself this is as it should be, for teachers cannot tolerate disruption for very long when it interferes with achieving the learning objectives.... Discipline should be conceived primarily in educational terms....it should be the means through which the children learn to cope with the social expectations they encounter; thus it has an important long range educational goal. (Kindsvatter and McLaughlin, 1985)

Enlightened teachers consider that their purpose is broadly based. They realize that for students there are more important concerns than passing tests and that classrooms are places in which students are really living, not just being groomed for real life at some future time. (Kindsvatter and McLaughlin, 1985)

Five dimensions of social power have been described and their general effect documented (French and Raven, 1968). They are expert power, referent power, legitimate power, and reward power. The teacher who is aware of the uses and possible pitfalls of each type of power has, therefore, a cogent rationale for appropriate discipline related practice. (Kindsvatter and McLaughlin, 1985)

A comparison of two sets of teachers on classroom behavior measures indicated numerous significant mean differences on variables listed below: Amount of disturbance teacher accepts; Monitoring of the class; Teacher consistently enforces rules; Efficiency of transitions; Students respect teacher; Amount of productive time; and Students obey teacher. Except for "amount of

disturbance teacher accepts" assessments indicate higher scores for more effective teachers. (Emmer, 1984)

Assessments on variable listed below showed no difference: Attractiveness of room; Democratic leadership; Teacher socializes with students; Teacher showmanship; Emphasis on grades; and Teacher's command of subject. (Emmer, 1984)

Student and teacher behavior occurs in the context of classroom activities (or in transitions between activities). Thus the design and conduct of activities is a critical task for teachers and has great impact on overall success of the classroom management system. (Emmer, 1984)

The results of this study provide no support for the posited relationship between students' content and process knowledge and socialization competency status as measured by teacher ratings....Although unexpected, this result is congruent with results of another Institute for Research on Teaching study in which students identified as "problem students" turned out to be as knowledgeable as other students about behavioral standards in the classroom. (Rohrkemper, 1981; Anderson, Prawat, and Anderson, 1985)

Reading achievement entered the equation first and was the only independent variable to contribute significantly to the total explained variance; approximately 16% of the total variance in the children's social problem solving ability was explained by this variable. This finding runs counter to research reviewed by Spivack et al. (1976) suggesting that students social problem solving ability is not merely a function of intelligence or verbal ability. However it is consistent with the more recent research of Knepper, Obhurtz, and Copeland (1983) and Pelligrini (1985); the results of these studies indicate that the level of cognitive development does play a role in student's social problem solving skill development. (Anderson, Prawat, and Anderson, 1985)

Again, however, reading achievement entered the equation first and was the only predictor variable to make a significant contribution to the total explained variance: 21% of the total variance in students' interpersonal problem solving ability was explained by this factor alone. (Anderson, Prawat, and Anderson, 1985)

Knowledge of what is expected, as well as what influences or controls the outcome of events, generally enhances one's ability to adapt to the environment. (Anderson, Prawat, and Anderson, 1985)

Environment: Classroom things and events cluster into small settings such as the morning opening, the reading circle, the social studies discussion, and so on. In this perspective, these small bounded segments have a physical milieu and an action structure, a standing pattern of behavior ....and a fittedness between milieu and action or program. (Gump, 1985)

Order: At one level, order is simple: it is the degree of conformity of participants....This definition, used in most research, is limited in focus not recognizing that the system--the setting cluster that these participants inhabit-- can itself be down or out of order. For most spans of classroom activity we can recognize what opportunities are being offered and what the appropriate environmental conditions would be. Yet it is common experience that these conditions often are not maintained. Thoughtful discussion of a social issue is interrupted by a trumpeted loudspeaker, pupil attention is drawn away from arithmetic by the repeated entrances and exits of special schedules, and so on. More persistent disorders in the system occur for those situations which require participants to wait for materials or signals which are not forthcoming. Such a condition often prevails at transition from one activity to another. These phases of classroom events can require for 20% to 30% of the child's classroom day. (Gump, 1985)

In the classroom reality, system order and pupil behavior become intertwined. Still the two ideas are separate and one needs to be aware of each in attempts to describe, diagnose, or influence classroom order. (Gump, 1985)

According to Daniel Duke, three strands of research have influenced the theory and practice of classroom management: studies of behavior modification, school effectiveness research, and research on teacher effects....Many of these studies have demonstrated clearly that, by their own behavior, teachers can influence the behavior of the students. (Strother, 1985)

Specific student behaviors that elementary teachers find least tolerable .... the two areas that elicited responses of least tolerance were negative aggressive.... and poor peer cooperation. The complete

list of specific descriptors is as follows. For negative aggressive behavior they were: (1) Pokes, torments, or teases classmates; (2) Destroys others' property; (3) Verbally belittles others; and (4) Breaks classroom rules. For poor peer cooperation they were: (1) Works poorly with peers and (2) Will not cooperate with other children by sharing equipment or materials. (Safran and Safran, 1984)

All the clusters rated as more tolerable can be described as inner or teacher directed (relevant thinking, blaming, confusion, need for direction, failure anxiety). These items....are largely nondisruptive to other students. This study supports previous findings that behaviors least tolerated by teachers are outer directed or disruptive, originating in the student by having an observable, tangible effect on other pupils. (Algozzine, 1977, 1979; Safran and Safran, 1984)

Teachers frequently interpret these outer directed student behaviors as more likely to disrupt others and contribute to a potential "behavioral contagion" effect (Kedar-Voivodas and Tannenbaum, 1979; Safran, 1982). In contrast the student who, for example, "avoids involvement or communication with others...., forgets directions...., or shows worry or gets anxious about work," interferes only minimally with the learning and perceived well-being of other students. The similarity in the ratings for these clusters does not suggest that these problems are less severe-- only that the behaviors are less disturbing to the teacher. (Safran and Safran, 1984)

Vernon Jones and Louise Jones ... suggest that to develop a comprehensive approach to classroom management, teachers need the following skills: Theoretical foundation (an understanding of students' personal and academic needs); Organizational and instructional skills (knowledge of how to motivate students and maximize on task behavior by using teaching methods appropriate to various learning styles and instructional goals); Interpersonal skills (the ability to work effectively with parents, to create positive peer relationships, and to establish positive teacher/student relationships); Prevention skills (the ability to develop effective classroom rules and procedures); and Correction skills (knowledge of and ability to use problem solving approaches and behavior modification techniques, both in one's own classroom as as part of a school wide program). (Strother, 1985)

Kounin videotaped daily activities in 80 elementary classrooms to determine what kinds of events tend to precede misbehavior and what teacher activities influence the behavior of students. Analysis of the videotapes revealed that other dimensions of group management far outweigh disciplinary techniques in their power to influence children's classroom behavior. (Strother, 1985)

Discipline is a process whereby certain relationships (associations) are established. It is a way of behavior, conducive to productive ends. First, it must be taught: secondly, it must be learned, i.e., internalized. (Tatum and Blair, 1982)

It is clear that the final goal of the education process is to provide the student with behaviors necessary for self-discipline. (Tatum and Blair, 1982)

Sometimes ignored is the term's (discipline's) positive meaning: the learning of good behavior. (Bayer, 1984)

....training programmes need to be longer and intimately linked with practice in schools if the short term impact of theories espoused at college ar not to be wiped out by classroom experience .... (Denscombe, 1983)

Educators and the general public tend to view "discipline" in its narrow and negative sense of punishment. (Bayer, 1984)

....amongst the variety of pupil behaviours that might be deemed "disruptive," it is the noisy disruptive behaviour that will be regarded as the most urgent and one that will receive priority treatment. (Denscombe, 1983)

Learning to make reasonable decisions that prevent escalation of already charged conflicts in the classroom is a goal for which all teachers should strive. (Tatum and Blair, 1982)